



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## *Extended Guidance on Practitioner Collaboration and Peer Review*

### → Overview

- Practitioner collaboration and peer review are intended to enhance the education profession by providing educators opportunities to boost their practice through structured interaction with a focus on instruction.
- In 2007, the Iowa Department of Education released the [Iowa Professional Development Model](#) (IPDM) in an effort to establish an expectation that professional development be created, implemented, monitored, and adjusted to realize student achievement gains at all levels. These endeavors are supported not only at the state level, but also at the national and local levels and with the support of many educational organizations representing teachers and educational leaders. With the focus on improving learning for all students, Iowa Code sections 284.6(8) and 284.8(1) again call for all educators to work collectively at improving the teaching and leadership practice by requiring educators to engage in practitioner collaboration and peer reviews.

### → Collective Bargaining and Teacher Quality Committees

- Professional development is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining. Whether or not the practitioner collaboration and peer review time is collectively bargained is dependent on how the use of collaborative time is structured within the district. For example, in the scenarios on page 3 of this memo, the districts are already in compliance with the practitioner collaboration requirements. Any uses of Teacher Quality money to support this should be handled through the Teacher Quality Committee.

### → Practitioner Collaboration

- The IPDM introduces the goal of professional development as professional learning through collective efforts among educators when experienced as a part of the day-to-day work of teaching and leading. Under Iowa Code section 284.6(8), the Department interprets<sup>1</sup> the language centered on “Practitioner Collaboration” to mean that the collaboration of practitioners is to be intended broadly and is inclusive of teachers and administrators working to improve instruction and, ultimately, student learning.
- In an effort to ensure and support regular and timely collaboration, Iowa Code section 284.6(8) requires that at least 36 hours annually “outside of the minimum school day,” during “non-preparation time or designated professional development time,” must be used by “practitioners to collaborate with each other” or “to engage in peer review” activities. The collaboration or review time is **not** to be confused with individual educator preparation time, and schools should **not** count individual preparation time as collaboration time.
- Another distinguishing element of the practitioner collaboration intended by this legislation is heavy reliance on the use of “one-to-one” or “many-to-many” collaborations among educators. It is expected that there is an authentic interaction among educators focused on instructional matters within their schools, buildings, or districts. The professional learning intended by Iowa Code section 284.6(8) actively involves the educators. The professional learning intended here is self-, peer-, or team-directed and active in nature.

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<sup>1</sup> The director of the Iowa Department of Education is authorized to interpret education statutes. *Iowa Assn. of Sch. Bds. v. Iowa Dept. of Educ.*, 739 N.W. 2d 303,307 (Iowa 2007).

- Practitioner collaboration is contrasted with traditional professional development, where educators receive professional learning in a “one-to-many” setting, such as hearing from an expert, or getting updates from the central office. Traditional professional development is generally other-directed from a facilitator, and the educator is a passive participant. This is not what is intended by this legislation. To best understand what practitioner collaboration might look like in a school/district setting, let’s think about it as a theory of action:

***If practitioners collaborate in a constructive and meaningful way by:***

- *focusing on improving teaching and student learning;*
- *meeting regularly with thoughtfully planned agendas, minutes, and concise follow-up actions;*
- *planning lessons, practicing lessons, debriefing lessons; organizing, analyzing, and summarizing data to plan instruction; solving problems related to student learning; reading, reflecting, and sharing articles that support learning goals;*

***And***

- *school leaders monitor, support, and participate in the collaborative process to ensure that efforts are focused on student learning and on district and building goals;*

***Then teaching and student learning will improve.***

**Practitioner collaboration is of high quality when ...**

- All teachers and/or teams are engaged in learning together in a collective way and throughout the school year. This collective learning provides opportunities for all teachers and/or teams to work together on a regular basis and deepen the school and/or district professional development initiative into the day-to-day work of teaching.
- The collective learning is facilitated and planned to include various roles (such as leader, task keeper, time keeper, recorder), agendas, minutes, and follow-up actions and provides adequate time (30 to 45 minutes) for in-depth learning.
- New learning builds knowledge and skills around the identified instructional practice and includes theory, demonstration, and practice.
- The collaborative team may spend the designated time planning, practicing, debriefing lessons; organizing, analyzing, and summarizing data to plan instruction; solving problems related to the school and/or district instructional initiative; reading, reflecting, and sharing articles or research that supports the instructional initiative. The learning should provide teachers and/or teams an opportunity to develop short-term and long-term plans.
- Leadership at all levels should continually engage in the evaluation and improvement of practitioner collaboration and professional development (e.g., the study of teacher implementation, student work samples, teacher videos, etc.).

***Pages 62-67 of the IPDM Technical Guide (2009) provides further examples, references, and planning tools.***

## → Frequently Asked Questions

- **What does “outside the minimum school day” mean for teachers? Does it mean outside the contractual day or outside their instructional time with students?**

The collaborative time should occur within the confines of the teacher’s contractual day but beyond the minimum state definition of 5.5 hours of instructional time. In order for this collaborative time to result in continuous professional discourse around student learning, districts should avoid logging the required hours during periodic professional development days (unless those days feature extensive practitioner collaboration); rather, the time should be used in on ongoing, sustained collaboration across the entire school year, and the focus must be on improving teaching and student learning.

- **Would data teams or PLC meetings scheduled during the contract day count toward the 36 hours?**  
Yes.
- **Would meeting prior to the school day but within the teacher’s contractual time suffice?**  
Yes, if that time is specifically used for practitioner collaboration.
- **Would “Authentic Intellectual Work” be considered practitioner collaboration?**  
Yes.
- **Would the “cluster” model used in the TAP System be considered practitioner collaboration?**  
Yes.
- **Will the state be requesting verification of the collaborative time by annual report or through site visits?**  
Evidence will be subject to review during accreditation visits.

## → Scenarios

- **The following model scenarios exemplify compliance with practitioner collaboration requirements:**

Scenario 1	Scenario 2
<p>A middle school has designated one of the seven periods in the day for “teacher collaboration.”</p> <p>Typically, during this time teachers from a given team work together on issues of instruction and student learning.</p>	<p>A district has structured an early student release every Wednesday afternoon. This time is used for multiple purposes.</p> <p>On certain Wednesdays, however, the focus is teacher collaboration. Therefore, the hours can be counted as practitioner collaboration.</p>

## → Peer Review

- Under Iowa Code section 284.8(1), school districts are required to conduct annual, rather than every third year, reviews of non-probationary teacher performance. The first and second years of such reviews will be “conducted by a peer group of teachers.” The Iowa General Assembly specifically prohibited peer reviews from being used as the basis for recommending that a teacher be placed in an intensive assistance program. As such, the peer review is intended for the purposes of coaching and improvement.

Consider another theory of action, this time related to peer review:

***If peer reviews are conducted by a peer group of teachers who:***

- *incorporate continuous feedback loops focused on improving instructional practices;*
- *focus on individualized coaching and support;*
- *engage teachers in self- and peer-reflections;*

***And***

- *teachers and peers know what information is expected of them and how the information will be used;*
- *receive adequate training on the peer review process that is fair, linked to the Iowa Teaching Standards (or subsequently developed standards), and involves authentic and open discussions about the teaching practice;*
- *confidentiality is maintained between the reviewer, the teacher, and the administrator;*
- *peer review involves multiple authentic sources of data - classroom visits, review of course materials, and a balanced inclusion of student outcomes;*
- *engages the teacher and the reviewer in an individualized and valuable discourse about the practice;*
- *incorporates the teacher's professional development plan for edits, revisions, or updates;*

***Then teachers will openly examine their teaching practices for the purpose of self-improvement and to improve their teaching effectiveness.***

### **A peer review is of high quality when ...**

- Practitioners develop ownership of the teaching practice and move toward making its discussion and improvement more visible within the school community.
- A group of professionals are analyzing, reflecting upon, and talking about their profession in an attempt to make it better.
- Teachers are assisted and supported in enhancing their effectiveness.
- Collective accountability and responsibility for teaching and learning is established.
- Attention is given to the art and craft of teaching and assisting the good teacher to become better.
- Districts use their evaluation framework as a basis for discussion, support, and planning – but peer review is not intended to inform the summative evaluation. It is intended to be an element of coaching with a focus on improvement.
- The review is reflective in nature by both the teacher and the reviewer around the teaching practice – openly sharing strengths, limitations, observations, etc. Reviewers should make thoughtful judgments about a teacher's practice and consider each educator individually.
- Expectations for peer review visits and follow-up are clear. Course materials are examined (i.e., assignments, projects, assessments, etc.).
- Reviewers may be of like grade range or subject where possible; however, this is not required. In some cases, cross-disciplinary or grade reviews may be beneficial. Configurations may also be within-building, across-district, or across multiple districts.

## → Frequently Asked Questions

- **Who should have input and/or select the reviewers?**

The selection of peer reviewers is not addressed in Code; therefore, this decision is left to the local districts to determine. A best practice would involve thoughtful selection of peer reviewers based on their instructional skills and aptitude for coaching and working with other adults.
- **How is the review to be documented?**

How a district maintains documentation of a peer review is a local decision.
- **Who has access to the review?**

Only administrators, peer reviewers, and individuals receiving the feedback should have access to the review artifacts.
- **Should it be part of the PLC work?**

Possibly. Schools engaged in professional learning communities may choose to incorporate the peer review process into this practice given the very intent focus on collaborative inquiry.
- **It appears that the law says the review will be conducted by a “peer group of teachers.” How many are needed?**

This is not addressed in the statute. At the school or district level, teachers and administrators need to devise a process that best suits the needs and resources of the school and the educators within it. One or more individuals may conduct peer reviews.
- **If two-thirds of the teachers each year are reviewed by a group, where will the time be found?**

The statute does not address this; nevertheless, peer review is a requirement. It is incumbent upon each school to meet the intent of the law, and therefore schools must reallocate resources or devise alternative master schedules in order to support this new requirement.
- **What about school nurses? Counselors?**

School or district employees assessed by the Iowa Teaching Standards need to participate in the peer review process. More specifically, as long as individuals fall under the scope of Teacher Quality legislation, they participate in the peer review process.
- **Could the teacher leadership structure in Governor Branstad’s proposed education reform legislation provide resources and be used to support peer review?**

As it was constructed in the Governor’s original bill, yes. However, this is still only proposed legislation and has not been signed into law.

## → Literature Review

1. Harvard Graduate School of Education (n.d.). *A User’s Guide to Peer Assistance and Review*. Cambridge, MA: Author. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt/par/resources/users\\_guide\\_to\\_par.pdf](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ngt/par/resources/users_guide_to_par.pdf)
  - *From the introduction:* This [publication] draws on the experiences of seven school districts, each with an established [Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)] program. It offers a wealth of practical information and advice about how to create and sustain PAR. It describes how PAR begins and how it works. It lays out the choices to be made in creating a PAR program and it provides examples, insights and documents that will assist reformers in the process.
2. Humphrey, D.C., Koppich, J.E., Bland, J.A., Bosetti, K.R. (2011). *Peer Review: Getting Serious About Teacher Evaluation*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International. Retrieved from:  
[http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/publications/PAR\\_PeerReviewReport\\_2011.pdf](http://policyweb.sri.com/cep/publications/PAR_PeerReviewReport_2011.pdf)

- From the introduction: This report begins with an overview of our research methods, highlighting the unprecedented access and cooperation we received from Poway and San Juan. Next are provided program profiles laying out the basic facts about the PAR programs in these districts. The report then addresses our three key areas of interest. First, we describe the work of the Consulting Teachers, examining the documentation of the professional support they offered their colleagues and the rigorous evaluations that accompanied that support. Next, we describe the work of the PAR Governance Board, highlighting its characteristics, responsibilities, and contributions. We then address the implications of the Poway and San Juan examples and of PAR more broadly for labor-management relations. The report concludes with the implications of our findings for policymakers, district officials, and union leaders.
3. Goldstein, J. (2012). Designing Transparent Teacher Evaluation: The Role of Oversight Panels for Professional Accountability. *Teachers College Record*, 111(4), 893-933. (ERIC Journal Number EJ835998) <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=EJ835998>
- From the ERIC abstract: This is an in-depth study of one urban district in California, given the pseudonym Rosemont, as it implemented PAR following California's legislation. Program: With PAR, designated "PAR coaches"--teachers identified for excellence and released from teaching duties full-time for 2-3 years--provide mentoring to teachers new to the district or the profession, intervention for identified veteran teachers experiencing difficulty, and the formal personnel evaluations of both groups. These PAR coaches are not school based but rather report to an oversight panel composed of teachers and administrators from across the district. Research Questions: A companion study previously found that the rate of dismissals increased dramatically after the implementation of PAR in Rosemont. This study examines one aspect of Rosemont's PAR program, its oversight panel. This study examines three questions that in turn address the design, process, and outcomes of PAR and the PAR panel in Rosemont: (1) How did the PAR panel work? (2) How, if at all, did the presence of an oversight panel affect the teacher evaluation process? (3) How, if at all, did the presence of an oversight panel affect personnel outcomes?
  - *Note:* The ERIC database no longer provides access to the full-text version of this resource. It may be found through university or public library systems.
4. Goldstein, J. (2004). Making Sense of Distributed Leadership: The Case of Peer Assistance and Review. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(2), 173 – 197 (ERIC Journal Number EJ737147) <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=EJ737147>
- *From the ERIC abstract:* This article explores a case of shifting leadership responsibility for teacher evaluation. Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) formally involves teachers in the summative evaluation of other teachers--although the boundaries of the involvement are often vague. Since teacher evaluation has traditionally been the domain of school principals, involving teachers in teacher evaluation raises questions about how those faced with the new role make sense of it and enact it. The article draws on theories of professions, organizations, and institutions to examine the implementation of PAR in one large urban school district. Findings suggest that, despite positive sentiments about the policy across stakeholder groups, those involved wanted principals to remain a central figure in the evaluation of teachers in PAR. Education's hierarchical norms, the difficulty of conducting evaluations, district leadership, and program ambiguity are identified as challenges to distributing leadership. (Contains 4 tables and 21 notes.)
  - *Note:* The ERIC database no longer provides access to the full-text version of this resource.

It may be found through university or public library systems.

5. Goldstein, J. (2007). Easy to Dance To: Solving the Problems of Teacher Evaluation with Peer Assistance and Review. *American Journal of Education*, 113(3), 479-508 (ERIC Journal Number EJ757585) <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=EJ757585>
  - *From the ERIC abstract:* Scholars and practitioners have long criticized teacher evaluation as ineffective. Peer assistance and review (PAR) alters traditional teacher evaluation, as master teachers conduct summative as well as formative assessment of beginning teachers and veteran teachers in need of intervention. Relying on data from a longitudinal case study of one urban district, this article describes key components of teacher evaluation with PAR, in particular how it differs from teacher evaluation as typically conducted by principals. Findings are reported across six key factors: time, professional development, transparency, labor relations, decision making, and accountability. Notably, a substantially higher level of accountability appeared present with PAR than prior to program implementation. In contrast to popular opinion, this study provides an example of teachers willing and able to engage in the summative evaluation of their peers, a key component of professionalism and professionalization. Implementation challenges and areas for future research are addressed.
  - *Note:* The ERIC database no longer provides access to the full-text version of this resource. It may be found through university or public library systems.
  
6. Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
  - *From the ERIC abstract:* The future of learning depends absolutely on the future of teaching. In this latest and most important collaboration, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan show how the quality of teaching is captured in a compelling new idea: the professional capital of every teacher working together in every school. Speaking out against policies that result in a teaching force that is inexperienced, inexpensive, and exhausted in short order, these two world authorities—who know teaching and leadership inside out—set out a groundbreaking new agenda to transform the future of teaching and public education. Ideas-driven, evidence-based, and strategically powerful, Professional Capital combats the tired arguments and stereotypes of teachers and teaching and shows us how to change them by demanding more of the teaching profession and more from systems that support it. This is a book that no one connected with schools can afford to ignore. This book features: (1) A powerful and practical solution to what ails American schools; (2) Action guidelines for all groups—individual teachers, administrators, schools and districts, state and federal leaders; (3) A next-generation update of core themes from the authors' bestselling book, "What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?"
  
7. Kumrow, D., & Dahlen, B. (2002). Is Peer Review an Effective Approach for Evaluating Teachers? *The Clearing House*, 75(5), 238–241. (ERIC Journal Number EJ651922) <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=EJ651922>
  - *From the ERIC abstract:* Suggests that there is a need to change the traditional evaluative process that treats teachers as supervised workers rather than collegial professionals. Examines the process, purpose, effectiveness, financial implications, and the future of peer review programs. Explains the process, purpose, and benefits of the program Peer Assistance and Review (PAR). Includes a case study of the Toledo, Ohio Peer Review

Program.

- *Note:* The ERIC database no longer provides access to the full-text version of this resource. It may be found through university or public library systems.

8. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality. (2011). *Expert Review Consensus Report 2010–11 review of Montgomery County Public Schools: Professional Growth Systems (PGS)*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from:

[http://resource.tqsource.org/evalmodel/PDFReport/MCPS\\_PGS.pdf](http://resource.tqsource.org/evalmodel/PDFReport/MCPS_PGS.pdf)

- *From the overview:* In collaboration with national experts in measurement and instruction, the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality developed a Teacher Evaluation Review Template to help guide an examination of district efforts related to teacher evaluation. The template guided the review through a series of probes that prompt a systematic assessment for critical reflection and appraisal of the district evaluation system. Three expert reviewers used this template to examine district websites, training materials, and other supporting documentation to provide this appraisal of PGS. The three reviews were consolidated into one report, shared with the district for endorsement, and finalized for inclusion on this website.

9. Papay, J. P., & Johnson, S. M. (2012). Is PAR a Good Investment? Understanding the Costs and Benefits of Teacher Peer Assistance and Review Programs. *Educational Policy*, 26(5), 696-729. (ERIC Journal Number EJ975887) <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/detail?accno=EJ975887>

- *From the ERIC abstract:* Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is a local labor-management initiative designed to improve teacher quality. In PAR, expert "consulting teachers" mentor, support, and evaluate novice and underperforming veteran teachers. Evaluations under PAR can lead to dismissals. The authors examine the costs and benefits of PAR, both financial and organizational. Although PAR is an expensive reform, costing US\$3,000 to US\$10,000 per teacher served, it affords the district a range of financial savings and organizational benefits that offset program costs. The authors argue that limiting the scope of an educational cost-benefit study to only quantifiable elements artificially constrains understanding what a reform actually requires and offers.
- *Note:* The ERIC database no longer provides access to the full-text version of this resource. It may be found through university or public library systems.

10. Zwart, R. C., Wubbels, T., Bergen, T., & Bolhuis, S. (2009). Which Characteristics of a Reciprocal Peer Coaching Context Affect Teacher Learning as Perceived by Teachers and Their Students? *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(3), 243–257. Retrieved from:

<http://jte.sagepub.com/content/60/3/243.short>

- *From the abstract:* In the present study, the role of five categories of characteristics of a reciprocal peer-coaching context was studied in relation to teacher learning. Both self-reports and student perceptions were used to measure teacher learning. Data were gathered on 28 secondary school teachers (14 coaching dyads). It was found that teachers learn 1) when they are intrinsically motivated to take part in professional development programs; 2) when they feel a certain pressure toward experimenting with new instructional methods; and 3) when they are able to discuss their experiences within a safe, constructive, and trustworthy reciprocal peer coaching environment.

## → Additional Organizations to Consult

1. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality: <http://www.tqsource.org/>
  - *From the website:* The TQ Center was created to serve as the premier national resource to which the regional comprehensive centers, states, and other education stakeholders turn for strengthening the quality of teaching—especially in high-poverty, low-performing, and hard-to-staff schools—and for finding guidance in addressing specific needs, thereby ensuring highly qualified teachers are serving students with special needs.
2. Center on Innovation and Improvement: <http://www.centerii.org/>
  - *From the website:* The Center on Innovation & Improvement supports [regional centers](#) in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students. The Center on Innovation & Improvement is administered by the [Academic Development Institute](#) in collaboration with its partners, the Temple University Institute for Schools and Society (Philadelphia, PA), Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies at Boise State University (Boise, ID), and [Little Planet Learning](#) (Nashville, TN).

## → Key Words and Search Terms

Peer AND evaluation OR observation OR assessment OR assistance OR review

## → Search of Databases and Websites

Institute of Education Sciences Sources: REL Program, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse, Doing What Works, National Center for Teacher Effectiveness

## → Search Engines and Databases

ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR